[147 cont.]

773 5. In the above three stories, there are intimations of the enmity between the various tribal groups and the origin of the ill-feeling between them. For instance in the first version the sons of the Miao king and the Han king struggled for the possession of land; the former who were clumsy and ignorant were taken advantage of by the latter, who were shrewd and cunning. In the second and third versions, the story of the brothers Thunder and En fighting repeatedly for the field, the former violent and belligerent, and the latter wicked and deceitful, possess the same significance. The most interesting 773 part of the first version has to do with the acquisition of a large ●829 area of land by the Han king and the subsequent convention at Tu-shan, in which the Chinese acquired a pen and was able to read, write and become officials, whereas the Miao king lost ground and retired to the mountains with the chicken feet left over from the meeting, and could only work hard by ploughing the field in the mountains. This is given as the reason why at present the Chinese are successful and the Miao are retarded.

773 6. The amusing section in the second and the third versions as to how the different tribes began to talk should interest the linguists. When En tossed the pieces of flesh around, the human beings coming out of them were at first unable to speak. In the second version En happened to burn the bamboo. In the third version he broke wind after a bean meal; both the noises of breaking wind and cracking bamboo stirred the human beings into talking. They spoke three different languages which became those of the Tung, the Miao and the Chinese. I wonder whether this would explain that at the time of human origin the differences between the races were due to the differences in languages. Furthermore, the earliest vocabulary of all races was related to food matters. In the third version, [148] the first words they uttered such as "ch'ih-fan" by the Chinese, "chi-kou" by the Tung, and "no-nüeh" by the Miao all have the same meaning of "eating rice" in different pronunciations. This is just like our teething infants who upon learning to speak, first learn the words "ch'ih-fan." How thought-provoking all this is!

AKha A04
Miao AE5

M 361 174

/28 cont./ great migratory tribe has visited almost all the mountains of Asia. Even today one would look in vain for Meau in the plains. The Meau of Kwangsi, of Kweichow, of Szechwan, of Yunnan, of Tonkin, of Laos are all mountain folk."

A 101 361

The Akha, too, always live in the high parts of the mountains. In addition to the regions named in connection with the Meau, the state of Kengtung should be added as the chief settlement area of the Akha. Telford divides the levels occupied by the various tribes as follows: the Lahu live highest, below them the Lisu, and below them the Akha. "The latter often settle in markedly steep mountain areas, though they prefer mountains of medium height."

A M 829

This pronounced preference of the mountain tribes for high settlement areas is very striking.

Under these circumstances it is understandable that the question of the reason for this strange fact has occupied other authors. Savina, for instance, writes (1): "If one asks them

1. II, p. 174.

why they live in the mountains and why they abhor the plains, they give various answers:

'In the mountains it is less hot, humid, and unhealthy.'

'We do not want to descend into the plains because we are afraid of the water, the leeches, and the buffalo.'

'We cannot live in the plains because we were born in the mountains. Transplanted trees never thrive.'

'How can we leave the mountains where the graves of our ancestors are?'

'The inhabitants of the plains are accustomed to the work and the cultivation of the plains, we Meau to the work and the cultivation of the mountains.'

'The people of the plains do not speak our language. How could we understand them?'

'If we were to descend into the plains, our girls would marry people who do not belong to our race.'

AKha A04
Miao AE5

A M 829

'In the plains there are too many wars, duties, soldiers, and mandarins!'

'If we were to settle down among the people on the plains, they would steal our herds.'

'We do not want to descend into the plains because there we could not cultivate opium and maize or plant fruit trees.'

'The soil of the mountains belongs to the Meau; the soil of the plains does not belong to them!"

Savina states that only one answered: "Because the other tribes do not want us to live in the plains with them." Savina is of the opinion that this is actually the true reason. There can be no doubt, however, that he is mistaken about this.

A M 164 361

In my opinion, the reason lies much deeper. It lies outside the realm of human volition and is based upon the constitutional nature of the mountain tribes. In contrast to the valley peoples, such as the Thai tribes, the Chinese, or the Annamese, the Meau and Akha, and presumably the majority of the tribes occupying this area today and known as "mountain tribes," are not capable of becoming acclimatized to the tropics, as is true, for example, of all the members of the white races. These tribes show an amazingly low resistance in particular to the tropical diseases, above all to malaria. In this connection Abadie's further statement is of special interest: "The Meau came to Tonkin long after the 'Thai' and 'Man.' With the latter they had many local battles over the arable land, which sometimes were long and fierce. Stronger and more energetic than their opponents, they would perhaps have driven them out of Upper-Tonking altogether had they been able to acclimatize themselves to the lower altitudes." In the chapter "Cultural Change and Colonial-Ethnological Problems among the Mountain Peoples in Thailand," section on "The Territories of the Mountain Peoples," I shall discuss at some length the extraordinary importance that this lack of ability to acclimatize has for colonial-ethnological affairs.

A M [174]

/166 cont./

776 825 [372] [626] [171] The spirit of fire is called tă hŏ lŭ pĭn. It is his function to take care of the fire. He would feel offended if one were to step over a fire, and he would take revenge in such a case by sending a tiger that would devour the perpetrator. Telford (1)

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reports that the Meau and the Yau in western China, in the region of Tschieng /167/ Hung in Yunnan, believe in a bush spirit, Pe Tum Moi. Anyone who goes into the bush, especially to fetch water or firewood, has to be wary of him, because in the daytime this spirit changes into a frog, which, if it is put in a cage, disappears during the night. It is said that Pe Tum Moi commonly appears to human beings in the shape of a tiger that devours men and horses.

776 [844] I discovered a pair of spirits that appear only at the birth of a child. Corresponding to the fact that this pair only has a joint effect, it also has only a joint name: me yĕn.

[778] [756] The spirit sŭ kăn is able to increase money and property. Many Meau and all shamans erect a small altar for him in their houses. In addition to the helpful spirits already mentioned, there are a great many of them for the most varied spheres. What superhuman capacities these spirits have over and above the familiar activity, however, is unknown to the people. Individual spirits for individual persons are in any case in the minority, and there are no tutelary spirits that have to attend to a single person, so to speak.

[753] Lajonquière (1) writes of "evil spirits that may enter the

II, p. 313.

human body in order to cause sickness. They live in the interior of the earth. They are the souls of the beheaded or of the unburied dead." In Thailand I was unable to find confirmation of [177] [829] this conception, which can probably be traced back to Chinese influence. I discovered in general that the Meau in Thailand

Miao AES

/167 cont./

776 [829] [773] know the deities of the neighboring tribes, but that they neither fear or revere them. The memory of the heroes of ancient times has also been lost. Thus they do not know who brought them their cultural goods, for instance, fire (for the spirit ta ho lu pin merely has to watch over the fire!), nor to whom they owe their social institutions.

In general the Meau do not know of any hierarchy of the spirits. It is of no consequence, for instance, that the teacher-spirit of the smithy has two assistant spirits whereas the spirit helping the doctor acts without any. All these spirits are more or less neutral in relation to one another and equal in rank, even when they appear as spirit pairs.

231/776 There are also /168/ spirits that are intentionally created by human beings. Among animals, dogs are the best friends of the Meau, and even the small child chooses the dog as his playmate, believing that it directly understands him. The adult Meau also appreciates the watchfulness of the dog, which guards the house against evil persons. Hence it is easy to understand how the conception arose that a dead dog would become a guardian spirit, who in the realm of the spirits, who live so much like human beings, would play a role similar to that of [775] the adult, live dog in the realm of human beings. This guardian-spirit dog protects the houses of the Meau against evil spirits. In order to create such a spirit a dog is killed in a prescribed manner. Since it is believed that the dog's age does not matter and that a newborn dog fulfills the same purpose as a full-grown animal, a newborn dog is, of course, usually selected for the guardian spirit. It will also carry out its task as a full-grown watchdog in the other world. The dog selected, usually a young dog, is killed either by hanging it from a noose and letting it struggle to death or by cutting its throat (Ill. 101).[1] Such a [782] killing therefore does not represent a sacrifice, but the creation of a guardian spirit.

1 [See cat. 116, p 666 - ANALYST]

Miao AE5

/190 cont./

224 If the hunter tracks a wounded animal and, while camping
787 at night, hears the cry of the large black squirrel, he assumes
825 that the game has died in the meantime. If a spider spins its web over the place of a hunter's fire, he infers from this that he will soon bag some game.

787 It is regarded as a bad omen when a bird alights in a camp
825 /191/ set up in the jungle. If the bird should perch on the tree under which one is resting and if, in addition, he is hit by its droppings, this is regarded as the most unfavorable omen imaginable. Strangely enough, omens are not linked with the conspicuous and common hornbill, whose plaintive call astonishes every stranger, even if he has not yet seen the grotesque appearance of the bird, and which plays an especially important role among head-hunting peoples. Monkeys, lizards, frogs, and fish likewise have little significance among the Meau, and heavenly [821] phenomena, too, are not connected with omens. Similarly there 754 are no practitioners of black magic among the Meau, although 824 the concept is generally known. For instance, it is believed that among the neighboring peoples in the valleys, especially among the Chinese and Lao, such magicians who are able to do harm to human beings are very common.

787 The art of soothsaying is also known to the Meau. The belief is that it is neither inheritable nor can it be taught, but that it simply depends on the will of the spirits which person is endowed with this faculty. And there is no means by which the will of the spirits can be influenced in this respect.

Great importance is ascribed to dreams since it is assumed -- as has been said -- that in sleep the soul goes wandering and therefore dreams are nothing but the experiences of the soul while a person is asleep. The interpretation of dreams is also the [756] business of the shaman, but, as in the case of omens, there are some dreams, too, that every Meau interprets in the same way.

[763] In general it is assumed that one's parents will die if he
[171] dreams that he is losing his teeth. In this connection it is interesting to note that the idea of a sinister meaning of a dream in which teeth play a role is also found among the Lao and Chinese, as well as in Europe.